

How Can I Improve My Ability to Switch Tasks?

Create a Clear Plan for Your Day

One way to improve your task switching is by planning ahead and creating a clear plan for your day. Break down tasks into smaller, achievable steps and assign a time limit or deadline to complete each step.

This will help you stay organized and focused while completing those tasks because you'll know exactly what needs to be done and when.

Try centering the plan around something pleasurable so that when tasks become tedious or difficult, your focus can be broken up with an activity that you enjoy. This will help create a more manageable system for completing tasks and transitioning between them.

Get Up and Move

One of the most important steps to improving your task switching skills is getting up and moving around – whether it's taking a quick lap around their house or workspace, going for a walk outside, or engaging in some physical activity, research has found that movement can be incredibly helpful for people with ADHD who are trying to switch tasks.

Incorporating regular mobility into task shifting routines can help give individuals with ADHD the energy boost they need to productively transition from one project to the next.

Change the Environment

When attempting to improve task switching, changing the environment may be beneficial. Putting yourself in a new physical space entirely can be helpful, but by this suggestion, know that there are other, smaller steps you can take as well. Additionally, maintaining a well-balanced diet that includes omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin B6, Vitamin D, and magnesium can support better task switching for those with ADHD, as proper nutrition plays a crucial role in managing symptoms.

By deliberately introducing cues that indicate task transitions like using color-coded folders or stickers, creating an organized and visible system of reminders, or leveraging aromatherapy scents into your workspace, you are introducing your own environmental signals that can help cue the brain into focusing on a different task.

Set Timers

Timers allow you to set a certain amount of time to work on a particular task and then at the end of the designated time frame, you can transition onto the next item. This structure helps keep distractions such as surfing the Internet and procrastination at bay while also providing a motivational device to get through challenging tasks.

Use Checklists and Visual Reminders

Using checklists and visual reminders can prove incredibly useful in achieving this. By creating a checklist of all the tasks you need to complete, you can tackle them one at a time without having multiple distractions floating around in your head.

Plus, using visual reminders whether they are physical objects or digital notes is an effective way of keeping you on track when completing tasks. Visual reminders provide direct cues that let you know exactly what you should be focusing on at any given moment, leaving no room for confusion or distraction.

Break Large Tasks Into Smaller Parts

To improve task switching for those with ADHD, it is important to break up large tasks into smaller parts.

This allows for an easier transition from one project to the next, which can be challenging due to difficulty in controlling impulsivity or short attention spans. Breaking up tasks gives a sense of accomplishment at each step and also decreases feelings of being overwhelmed.

It helps to establish a manageable plan that small steps can be taken toward completing the overall task, allowing for time to reflect on decisions and changes as necessary.

Plus, breaking up large tasks into smaller parts offers an opportunity to organize information more easily and even tackle seemingly impossible projects. By taking this approach of breaking down difficult tasks into more manageable chunks, task switching with ADHD will become much easier.

Give Yourself Rewards

One of the best ways to improve your task switching with ADHD is to give yourself rewards. This technique works because it gives you a sense of accomplishment that encourages you to keep going and stay motivated.

For instance, after completing a certain goal or milestone, you could reward yourself by taking a few minutes off from work to do something enjoyable like taking a walk or [playing a game](#). By recognizing the amount of effort put in and rewarding it with something fun and rewarding, the motivation for completing future tasks can drastically increase.

Not only that, but this method can help break up your tasks into more manageable chunks which allows for better focusing on one specific thing at a time.

Chunk Similar Tasks Together

One of the more efficient tactics for managing multiple tasks is to use ‘grouping similar tasks’ as a strategy. Chunking, as it is sometimes called, involves grouping tasks and completing them one after another, instead of trying to switch between two or more completely different tasks every few minutes. Task paralysis can appear to outsiders as laziness when it’s really a frozen state of goal-directed behavior, which makes strategies like chunking even more valuable for individuals who struggle with task switching.

For example, if your daily duties consist of errands and paperwork, it may be wise to run all your errands at once and then come back and work on the paperwork all at once – rather than alternating among the two activities.

The idea behind this practice is that it increases focus and cuts down the time necessary to make transitions between activities. Plus, since knowing details about each individual task in advance can help plan out adequate time for completion, chunking similar activities also helps with focusing on both long-term priorities and short-term goals.

Make Lists of Activities That Are Hard to Stop, Then Time Them Right

Another possible solution is to make a list of activities that are especially hard for you to stop once you’re involved in them, as our brains are incapable of processing more than one thing at a time.

Estimate how much time each action should realistically take, and then set timers for each activity so that you switch tasks on time. This technique can help keep you from getting lost in certain unproductive tasks, giving you more control over your day and allowing you to complete projects more efficiently.

To complete a time estimation activity, download our free .pdf time log and goal setting worksheet to help you evaluate your time management.

Remember Your Why

Remembering why we set out to do certain activities or tasks in the first place is an important part of improving our ability to switch focus. Understanding the motivation behind each next task can help motivate you to begin new tasks and also remind you precisely why you need to move between them efficiently.

Reframing difficult activities as means of achieving something bigger can also provide deeper meaning that helps keep motivation and momentum during long periods of task-switching.

Keep an Eye on Your Self Talk

How do you speak to yourself in your head about your abilities to switch tasks? If the answer is anything but positive, it's time to rethink and reframe how you go about this internal dialogue. Be kind to yourself and remember that negative self talk won't help you get any better at switching tasks – it will just discourage you.

Get Rid Of Distractors

If there are any distractions around the house, such as phones or TVs, it can be helpful to turn them off so that they don't distract you from completing the task at hand. For instance, if someone enters the room and starts talking, it can disrupt your focus and concentration, especially if you have ADHD. It's also a good idea to make sure that your workspace is organized and tidy so that there is nothing around that could potentially pull your attention away from what you're doing.

Have a Warm-Up Routine for Larger Projects

If you're about to tackle a larger project, it can be helpful to have a warm-up routine before diving in headfirst. This might include making sure that all of your necessary materials are on hand, taking a few deep breaths, or writing down some ideas related to the project before getting started.

Having a consistent routine like this will help get your brain ready for the work ahead and will ensure that you're mentally prepared for whatever comes next.

Use an Accountability Partner

Having someone who holds you accountable for completing tasks can be an incredibly effective way of staying focused and motivated while tackling large projects or switching between tasks quickly. Your accountability partner should check in with you regularly so that they know how much progress has been made and whether or not any extra help is needed along the way.

Give Yourself Buffer Time Between Stopping One Task and Starting The Next

Switching between tasks can sometimes leave us feeling overwhelmed or disoriented if we don't give ourselves enough time in between activities. It's important to give yourself buffer time so that your brain has time to process what has

been accomplished and transition into the new activity without feeling too bogged down by all of the changes happening at once.

Try scheduling some downtime between tasks if possible so that your mind isn't constantly jumping from one thing to another without rest stops in between!

Managing Transitions

Managing transitions is a critical aspect of task switching, particularly for individuals with ADHD. Transitions refer to the process of switching from one task or activity to another. For individuals with ADHD, transitions can be challenging, as they often struggle to disengage from one task and engage with another. Task-switching training in ADHD children showed significant reductions in switching costs after intervention, demonstrating the potential for improvement with targeted strategies. Strategies such as using a timer, breaking tasks into smaller steps, and providing a warning before transitioning to a new task can be incredibly helpful in managing transitions and improving task switching performance. Furthermore, techniques like deep breathing, jumping jacks, or other physical activities can help individuals with ADHD switch gears and prepare for a new task.

Cognitive Flexibility and Decision Making

Cognitive flexibility refers to the ability to switch between different mental sets or tasks. In individuals with ADHD, cognitive flexibility can be impaired, leading to difficulties with task switching and decision making. Decision making involves weighing options, considering consequences, and selecting a course of action. For individuals with ADHD, decision making can be challenging, particularly when faced with multiple options or distractions. Strategies such as breaking down decisions into smaller steps, seeking input from others, and using visual aids can help improve decision making and cognitive flexibility in individuals with ADHD. By improving cognitive flexibility and decision making, individuals with ADHD can better navigate complex situations and improve their overall quality of life.

Final Thoughts

Although switching from one task to the next in daily life might sometimes feel like a complicated juggling act, the reality is that it can be done with relative ease provided that you give yourself the right tools in your mental toolbox.

Follow this advice and you'll find yourself getting more stuff done – and with far less stress and anxiety to boot.

Summary

Task switching (moving quickly between different tasks) can feel overwhelming, especially with ADHD. Common challenges include losing focus, trouble getting started, and feeling stressed by transitions. Here's what can help:

- **Plan your day clearly:** break tasks into small, manageable steps.
- **Use timers and checklists:** stay organized and reduce distractions.
- **Group similar tasks together:** minimize mental shifts.
- **Move your body:** quick breaks refresh your brain.
- **Reward yourself:** celebrate when you complete tasks.
- **Change your environment:** use visual cues to help transition between tasks.
- **Add buffer time between tasks:** allow your brain a short rest.
- **Try coaching:** executive function support can teach helpful skills.

Practicing these strategies can make task switching feel easier, less stressful, and more manageable.

Read More Here!

- [Why Task Switching is Difficult for ADHD Brains — and 7 Ways to Smooth Transitions](#)
- [Task switching and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder](#)
- [Rebekah Pierce: Perfectionism & ADHD: Everything You Need To Know](#)
- [Rebekah Pierce: 14 Tips For Managing ADHD \(and Neurodivergence\) At Work](#)
- [Rebekah Pierce: Time Blindness & ADHD: What You Need To Know](#)
- [Rebekah Pierce: What Is Task Paralysis And How To Combat It](#)
- <https://lifeskillsadvocate.com/blog/task-switching-adhd/>

References

- Cepeda, N. J., Cepeda, M. L., & Kramer, A. F. (2000). Task switching and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Evidence from trial-by-trial cuing. *Neuropsychology*, 14(4), 543–553. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0894-4105.14.4.543>
- Healthline Editorial. (2023, February). *ADHD and task switching: Tips for improvement*. Healthline. <https://www.healthline.com/health/adhd/task-switching-adhd>
- Monsell, S. (2003). Task switching. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 7(3), 134–140. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613\(03\)00028-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1364-6613(03)00028-7)
- Rubia, K. (2014). Neuropsychological insights into ADHD cognitive flexibility. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 55(12), 1210–1213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.12204>
- Schuch, S., & Linden, D. E. J. (2004). Organizational deficiencies during task switching in adults with ADHD. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 113(2), 216–222. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.113.2.216>
- Wilding, J., Miyake, A., & Fisk, A. (2002). Training task switching in ADHD increases executive control. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 5, Article 180. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2011.00180>